

Weeks Bay Research Reserve Education is Change on the Ground

2017

Connect



9,317 acres of protected
coastal habitat

7,350 visitors to the
Weeks Bay Visitors Center



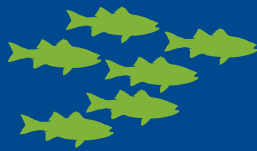
Prepare

1,065 students engaged
3,022 student contact hours

Improve



3,834 people reached by public programs
3,427 volunteer hours in education



"The Alabama Coastal Cleanup is an incredible opportunity for volunteers to give back to their community by cleaning harmful litter from our beautiful waterways while also learning that litter can have devastating impacts to wildlife. It's one of the best educational opportunities in our community."

Kara Lankford
cleanup zone captain
Mobile Bay Causeway site

"Did parents and children have a good time? Yes! Did they learn something new? Yes! Did your program (Squeaky Sneakers) add value to the 25 children who attended? Yes! Did I learn something new? Yes!"

Julee Howard
Fairhope Library



Squeaky Sneakers Fosters a Love of Nature through Art

Since 2008, Squeaky Sneakers, an interdisciplinary program that marries art and science education, has engaged over 1,800 participants ranging in age from preschool to senior citizens with a variety of abilities and backgrounds. Squeaky Sneakers strives to enhance ecological awareness and protection among culturally diverse and underserved communities. The program blends field based estuarine education with natural history observations, journaling, and artistic expression through a variety of media. From seining in the bay and cast netting to creating watercolor art and dancing the jellyfish dance, participants learn of the importance of estuaries as nurseries for sea life and their role as stewards to these vital habitats.



Get the Trash out of the Splash

Each September, volunteers participate in the Alabama Coastal Cleanup by coming out to local beaches, bays, and rivers to help "Get the Trash Out of the Splash". In the 30 years since its humble beginning with just 2 cleanup sites, the program has grown to include over 30 sites and more than 5,000 volunteers annually. Over the years, volunteers have picked up more than 1.6 million pounds of trash including an incredible 640,000 cigarette butts, 190,000 plastic bottles, and 103,000 plastic bags. This cleanup event appeals to volunteers of all ages and reinforces the strong connection that many coastal residents have to the abundant water resources. Volunteers are transformed into citizen scientists as they collect data on trash types and amounts. This data is used by the Reserve and the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program to develop education strategies that help stop litter from reaching waterways. This successful event engages community members in becoming better environmental stewards while educating them on behavior choices that protect, enhance, and promote coastal resources.

Alabama's Weeks Bay Reserve is one of 29 sites in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Each site is a state federal partnership that combines research, monitoring, and education to advance the understanding and management of estuarine environments.



National Estuarine Research Reserve Education Change on the Ground in 2017

Connects

People to Estuaries

**1 million+
ACRES**

of natural classrooms &
living laboratories with

**28 INTERPRETIVE
CENTERS**



*Aloha to
our Hawai'i
Reserve,
designated
in 2017!*



**650,340
VISITORS**

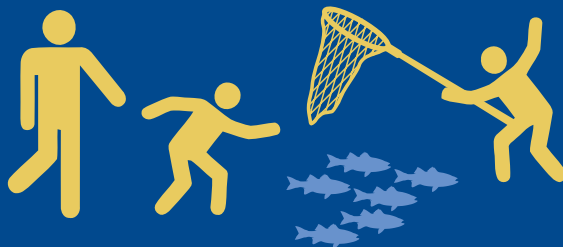
learn about estuaries
through Research Reserve
outreach & education

Prepares

the Next Generation

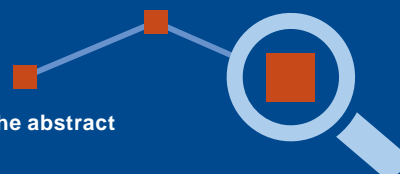
**3,079
TEACHERS**

are trained in the
estuary & supported
in the classroom



**87,899
STUDENTS**

take learning out of the abstract
& into the outdoors



SKILLS BUILT

- ✓ Observation
- ✓ Asking research questions
- ✓ Problem solving
- ✓ Data driven decision making

ESTUARY SCIENCE

LOCAL DATA

LAB WORK

FIELD INVESTIGATION

Improves

the Environment

**12,849
CITIZENS**

are trained & inspired
to protect their coasts
& estuaries



VOLUNTEER ACTIONS

- ✓ Protect wildlife
- ✓ Monitor water quality
- ✓ Plant native species
- ✓ Clean up the coasts

**28 RESEARCH RESERVE
EDUCATORS**

lead programs that foster coastal
stewardship in communities in 23 states



Creating value through education
39,035 volunteer hours = \$942,305*

coast.noaa.gov/estuaries

*Value of a volunteer hour is calculated at \$24.14
based on data from the Independent Sector.